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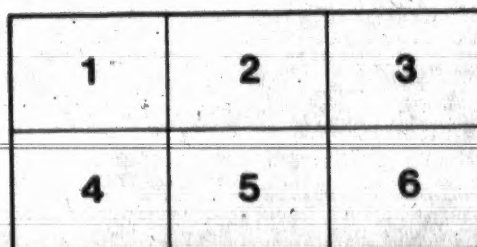
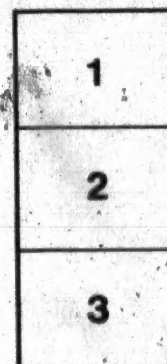
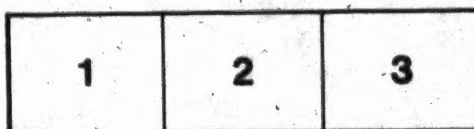
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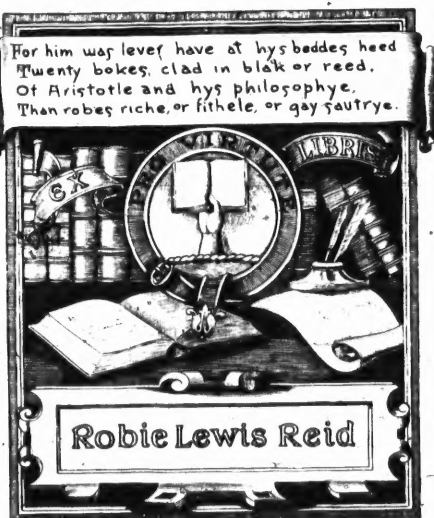
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Miss E.G. Stone, with the compliments of the author
William Wood
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FOOTNOTES TO
Canadian Folksongs

By WILLIAM WOOD

OF QUEBEC

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V.—Footnotes to *Canadian Folksongs*.

By WILLIAM WOOD, of Quebec.

(Read May 23, 1894, and communicated by Dr. Stewart, F.R.S.C.)

(Re-written, October, 1896.)

I.

COLLECTION.

Collectors of folklore so often lament that they have begun their work too late, and they so often find themselves mere gleaners of the little that has escaped the natural decay in fields once white with a harvest which no one ever thought of reaping, that some sort of a prose variant of the *chanson des regrets* is usually expected to form a part of every well-conducted preface. Just now, folklore is quite one of the proper things to dabble in, and, as the general reader is nothing if not fashionable, it will be a consolation for him to know that, in turning his attention to Canadian folksongs, he will be sure to find enough irreparable loss to give him plenty of the dainty sweet of melancholy. As we read in Mr. Gagnon's delightful book¹ of the difficulties of collection thirty years ago, or note in Dr. Larue's most interesting essay,² written about the same time, the many references to the bygone glories of the folksong, we find only too convincing a proof of that state of rapid transition from the old order to the new, when the folk begin to be self-conscious and the collector realizes that opportunity is bald behind.

It is to the collections of Mr. Gagnon and Dr. Larue that student and general reader alike must turn for information. Both works are exactly what they profess to be—a rather uncommon literary virtue; and both are quite admirable within their limits. But their limitations unfortunately prevent their being regarded as, in any way, final contributions to folklore. Dr. Larue's paper is an essay, well written indeed, in exactly the right way and most fully and aptly illustrated by quotations; but still only an essay. Mr. Gagnon's contribution is longer and more important, and it has gone through three editions. He has given us of his best, and that best is so good that it is hard to see how anyone working on the same lines can ever better it; but then, as he says himself,³ "*le nombre de nos chansons populaires est incalculable*" and "*ce volume en contient juste cent.*"

It is, of course, too late now to make any approach to an ideal edition, so far as collection is concerned; and there is as yet so much

hypothesis and so little sound theory on many points of folklore, that it is manifestly too early to expect a perfect critical apparatus; but a good edition for the student is still within reach, if only it is taken in hand at once and carried out with thoroughness. To be complete, such an edition should have maps of France and Canada in the time of the Grand Monarque, showing, as nearly as possible, the old and new homes of the emigrants: it should also have folklore maps of both countries at the present time. An index, a bibliography and a glossary with philological introduction are quite indispensable. Verse and music being inseparable in the folksong, their mutual relations should be explained in a preface; but, to ensure full justice to each, separate introductions should be written, that to the verse showing the place of the folksong in the beliefs, manners and customs and general life-history of the people. Besides this, every song should have its two foot-notes, one on the verse, the other on the air, where all variants, Canadian, French and foreign, should be cited with exact bibliographical references. It is fortunately unnecessary, now-a-days, to insist upon a faithful text, that being taken for granted. But there are degrees of faithfulness, and nothing short of perfection should be accepted. When a song is taken down from oral tradition, not only should every musical note be exactly reproduced, but every appropriate gesture should be noted as well; and, when the perfect authenticity of the manuscript version has been proved, the editor should see that the printing follows it line for line, word for word and letter for letter. Even this is not enough to ensure absolute fidelity in all cases, for it is sometimes very hard to withstand the temptation to make up a complete editorial version out of authentic fragments: finding all the materials is not the same thing as the discovery of the building.

One word as to the collectors themselves. If there is one thing more than another which needs sympathy, tact and an insight into human nature, it is the collection of folksongs. The mere patience required is no small thing, as we can see from the difficulties Mr. Gagnon met with here in Canada, where, as in old Normandy, the songs were as plentiful as the apples. But the chief difficulty to overcome is the shyness and suspicion of the folk when they know they are being observed. Their first instinct is to deny all knowledge of superstitious practices, out-of-the-way customs or curious legends, and so, perhaps, the best collecting of all is done as it were by accident, by living among the people and gathering up the songs and stories they let fall from time to time. Mlle Hélène Vacaresco, to whom we owe the splendid collection of Roumanian folksongs, published in England³ under the title of *The Bard of the Dimbovitza*, "was forced to affect a desire to learn spinning, that she might join the girls at their spinning-parties, and so overhear their songs more easily; she hid in the tall maize to hear the reapers crooning them; she caught them from the lips of peasant women, of lute-players, of gipsies and fortune-

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tellers; she listened for them by death-beds, by cradles, at the dance and in the tavern, with inexhaustible patience." Another successful collector is the Rev. Elias Owen, who turned his position of inspector of schools to admirable account. "At the close of his examination he asked the first class, 'Now, children, can you tell me of any place where there is a buggan to be seen, or of any one who has ever seen one?' Instantly every hand in the class was stretched out, and every child had a story to tell. He then asked, 'Which of you can tell me of a cure for warts?' With like results, greatly to the discomfiture of his friend, the clergyman, who had fondly imagined that there was no superstition in his parish! The clergy are very liable to this illusion, because the people are apt to keep superstition out of their way, which in itself is a not uninteresting folklore item." But, perhaps, the best of all collectors was old Wilhelm Mannhardt. "It is on record that he was once taken for a gnome by a peasant he had been questioning. His personal appearance may have helped the illusion; he was small and irregularly made; and was then only just emerging from a sickly childhood spent beside the Baltic in dreaming over the creations of popular fancy. Then, too, he wore a little red cap, which was doubtless fraught with supernatural suggestions. But, above all, the story proves that Mannhardt had solved the difficulty of dealing with primitive folk; that instead of being looked upon as a profane and prying layman, he was regarded as one who was more than initiated into the mysteries—as one who was a mystery himself."

The student's edition may or may not come; if it should, we shall then be able to review and revise with a fuller knowledge of the bearings of the whole subject; but, in the mean time, I have thought it might not be without an interest of its own to take the works of Mr. Gagnon and Dr. Larue as they stand and note down some of the more salient features they present to a lover of folksong. I do not pretend to deal exhaustively with my texts, nor, in the present paper, to go a step beyond them; and so I would beg my readers not to look upon this as in any way an attempt at a treatise, but simply as footnotes to those two collections which have long been accessible to the general public.

II.

NON-POPULAR SONGS.

Before coming to the folksongs proper, it would be as well to consider shortly some intruders, which, though occasionally naturalized among them, are none the less intruders still.

The *Lyric* is so obviously non-popular that the merest mention is sufficient to put it out of court; still, no hard-and-fast line can be drawn even between the lyric and the folksong, so insensibly does each some-

times approach the other. A lonely lyric may be born in an unhappy time, perhaps during an exile shared by many beside its single singer, and then—so sweet are the uses of adversity in the realm of song—all the exiles will adopt it, cradle it in their sorrow, and bring it home at last as their very own : who has not heard and laid to heart the song of

Un Canadien errant,
Banni de ses foyers ?⁹

But this is an exception which proves the rule.

The *Vaudeville*, that product of the bourgeois versifier and joy of the bourgeois heart, is, in France, the greatest enemy the folksong has to fear. It has no recognized place in Mr. Gagnon's book and is not yet a power in Canada ; but it is not likely that the inter-communication between town and country and the exodus to the United States can go on much longer without profoundly affecting French-Canadian popular life and song. If only the vaudeville and its offshoots were entirely products of the bourgeois wit, they would not be half so dangerous as they are ; but, whilst all is fish that comes to their net—political and historical songs, the poetry of the day, love-songs and drawing-room ditties, together with parodies of psalms, hymns and all sorts of religious verse—their choicest quarry has usually been the words of a folksong and the air of a popular dance. It is to such an origin that many vaudevilles owe their tremendous vogue : like the Janissaries the folksong is kidnapped from its early home, reared among the aliens, and finally sent back to destroy its own kin.

The *Noël*¹⁰ is another strictly non-popular form. It is, at best, an adaptation, composed under the direct or indirect influence of the priesthood, and made up of the most heterogeneous materials. Some noëls are simply versified accounts of the birth of Christ and are almost entirely of Christian origin ; the beautiful one given by Mr. Gagnon is of this nature and is a remarkable example of the fusion of the Noël and folksong into a real poem. But most are composed of whatever was handiest to the adapter : so we find noëls derived from folksongs, from Christian hymns and Pagan formulæ, from vaudevilles, from love-songs, from drinking-songs, from rounds and rhymes for dancing, from fairy-tales, hero-tales and drolls, from mystery-plays, and from events of real history. All doubtless contain popular elements—the dramatic element, for instance, which they borrowed from the folksong, usually by way of the mediæval *mysteries*, *fêtes des fous* and *fêtes de l'âne* ; but they are not themselves popular, because they never came directly from the lore of the folk itself. Their popularity in Provence proves nothing, for the Provençal Noël is most popular when it is least essentially a true Noël. A convincing proof of their non-popular character is the well-known fact, that, from the sixteenth century on, they have been so common in printed col-

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lections : moreover, in these collections, the authors' names are often given and we find them to have been mostly those of priests, organists and men of letters, who all had some learning to boast of and who generally show unmistakable signs of having looked at their theme through the spectacles of books.

Less popular than the *Noël* or the *Vaudeville*, and not much more so than the *Lyric*, is the *Drinking-song*. The French-Canadian so-called drinking-song, like its fellows elsewhere, is really not a drinking-song at all. It may be a specimen of pot-house jingle, like *Vive la Canadienne*,¹¹ or a maid's lament that her lover prefers the company of his boozing companions to her own,¹² or a gallant's toast to his mistress,¹³ or the expression of a rejected lover's determination to drown his woes in the bottle,¹⁴ or a versified account of a rollicking adventure in which the singer takes a conscious pride in saying

On dit que je suis fier,
Ivrogne et paresseux ;

and does not scruple to send this very unabashed confession to M. le Curé :

Dis-lui que sa paroisse
Est sans dessus dessous,
Que dans le P'tit Bois d'Aille
On n'y voit qu' des gens soûls : ¹⁵

it may be any one of these, or something of the same kind ; but it is not a drinking-song. A drinking-song, pure and simple, is a song in praise of wine, and whatever else is said in praise of love, or war, or other gallant delights only serves to enhance the importance of the theme. Perhaps, the somewhat gross imagination of the folk cannot take flight except upon the wings of love and other of the finer passions, and, perhaps, an educated fancy and an allusive wit are necessary to give the more material things of life the little power of flight vouchsafed to them ; but it is certain that such folksongs as this one, which is still sung by the harvesters in the remoter dales of Craven, are rare exceptions to a general rule :

This ale 't is a gallant thing,
It cheers the spirits of a king,
It makes a dumb man strive to sing,
Ay, and a beggar play ! ¹⁶

Take almost any collection of drinking-songs and you will find most of them are lyrics of clever verse with a spice of real, or least mock, learning in them. Adam Billaut, who wrote as his own epitaph

Ci-gît le plus grand ivrogne
Qui jamais ait vu le jour, ¹⁷

declared, in another place,¹⁸ his intention of going

..... dans l'Averne,
Faire enivrer Aleçon,
Et planter une taverne
Dans la chambre de Pluton.

In Boileau's account of a famous drinking-bout,¹⁹ though

Un docteur est alors au bout de son latin,

wine is still the best aid to knowledge, for

On est savant quand on boit bien,
Qui ne sait boire ne sait rien.

Old Dr. Fischart, of bibulous memory, invokes the spirit of wine in a way quite alien to the Canadian folksinger:

Nun bist mir recht willkommen,
Du edler Rebensaft;
Ich hab' gar wohl vernommen,
Du bringst mir süsse Kraft;
Lässt mir mein G'muth nicht sinken,
Und stärkst das Herze mein,
Drum wollen wir dich trinken,
Und alle fröhlich seyn.²⁰

And Goethe, in writing

Drum, Brüderchen! Ergo bibamus,

was only following the time-honoured custom of innumerable versifying scholars in mixing dead and living languages together in the praise of wine. Gaudeamus, laudamus, vivamus are words constantly occurring in the refrains of drinking-songs; so are Bacchus, Venus and many more; and all are used with an evident knowledge of their proper sense and fitness. What M. Tiersot says²¹ of the French drinking-song may be said with even more truth of the Canadian—"la chanson à boire n'est pas un genre de chanson populaire."

III.

THE FOLKSONG PROPER.

Impersonality is of the very essence of the folksong. "Ce livre," says Mr. Gagnon,²² "n'est pas du tout mon œuvre. C'est l'œuvre de ce compositeur insaisissable qu'on appelle *le peuple*." And Signor Pitre tells us that the Sicilians will not sing a song at all if they know who the author is. Even in the case of songs, usually of a humorous nature, where the author devotes the last verse to revealing or hinting at, his identity—

Qui a fait cette jolie chanson?

the impersonal note is the dominant one: the author, instead of trying to impress his own point of view upon others, simply giving voice to the thought and feeling of his folk. And even in the love-song—though love is personal before all else—the impersonal note is clearly struck: the lover sings of his own joys and pain in his own way, but never without an undertone which tells of the burden common to his folk at large. It is partly a cause, partly an effect, of this impersonality that the folk-

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song is often so vividly dramatic, yet without showing the least touch of self-consciousness. There is neither the desire nor the opportunity for an artificial pose. The Grimms declared that in the whole range of folk-song they had never found a single lie; and, indeed, there is no folksinger who, if asked the reason of his singing, could not truly answer in the words of Goethe's minstrel

Ich singe, wie der Vogel singt,
Der in den Zweigen wohnt;
Das Lied, das aus der Kehle dringt,
Ist Lohn das reichlich lohnet!

It is this very truth to life that gives the note of melancholy. Children know this well, and, when they want to be amused, never ask you to sing them songs, but to tell them stories; for in the folktale the hero and heroine, after the fearful joy of wonderful adventures, generally get married and live happily ever after; whereas in verse they are more often united only by death: the folksong is, indeed, a "melancholy strain." "Songs are the words spoken by those that suffer," says a Greek folksinger in words of which Shelley's, "Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought" seem like a literary paraphrase. If the folk cultivate poetry as a gay science in any tongue at all, it is in the French, and, if French folksongs are sung with a lighter heart in any one land more than in another, they are so sung in Canada. Yet, Mr. Gagnon has to quote the Grimms' dictum in prefacing the wedding-song *A la santé de ces jeunes Mariés*; and he is certainly justified in doing so, whilst drawing our attention at the same time to another true saying, "La crainte est de toutes les fêtes," for we find these words in the very middle of the toast,

Je puis bien parler
De tous ceux et celles
Qui se prennent sans s'aimer
Et meur'nt sans se regretter.²³

In another place²⁴ he gives us the rollicking song of the *Trois Capitaines*, who are going off to the tavern on their return from the war. This is an occasion of more certain jollity than even a marriage-feast, and the verses certainly have the ring of jollity in them; but the air to which they are sung is anything but gay. "Pourquoi ces couplets si gais se chantent-ils dans le mode mineur?" asks Mr. Gagnon, and quotes Châteaubriand for the answer: "dans tous les pays le chant naturel de l'homme est triste; lors même qu'il exprime le bonheur." When Brizeux wrote the following lines he was thinking only of his own romantic part of France, but I would like to quote them here as they seem to me almost equally applicable to our Canada—

Hélas! je sais un chant d'amour
Triste ou gai tour à tour.

Cette chanson, douce à l'oreille,
Pour le cœur n'a point sa pareille.

J'avais douze ans lorsqu'en Bretagne
On me l'apprit sur la montagne.

Avec un air, une parole,
Toujours l'exilé se console.

Ce chant, qui de mon cœur s'élève,
D'où vient qu'en pleurant je l'achève ?

Hélas ! je sais un chant d'amour
Triste ou gai tour à tour.

"Triste ou gai tour à tour," that is just what Canadian folksongs are ; but the general burden of the folksong all the world over is more nearly sad than gay. Though, perhaps, it was not in sadness that the Highland reaper sang, yet, "whate'er the theme," the melancholy undertone was there, and that the listening poet caught its meaning we know well from his haunting lines :

Will no one tell me what she sings ?
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
For old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago :
Or is it some more humble lay,
Familiar matter of to-day ?
Some natural sorrow, loss or pain,
That has been, and may be again !

Sympathy, truth and melancholy, these three prime qualities give a mighty power to the folksong, alike in the world of action or of art. It is said²⁵ that at the battle of St. Cast, as a Breton regiment was advancing to the attack, it suddenly halted in amazement ; the opposing regiment of the British army was a Welsh one and the men were singing a song heard daily in Brittany itself ! The order to fire was given ; but both sides gave it in the same tongue ! In a wild transport of enthusiasm discipline was thrown to the winds, the ranks were broken, and the long-lost Celtic kinship was renewed upon the field of battle ! Even the faithful Swiss Guards were not proof against the intense longing aroused in them by the sound of their native airs, and it was found necessary to forbid the playing of the *Ranz des Vaches* altogether. The folksong is everywhere the home of fancy in a far-off land, and Canadians have never been without it wherever they have been. It went out to the new Far West in the pioneering days when the Red River Settlement seemed to be at the end of the Earth, and it went in our own day with the same hardy class of voyageurs to the banks of the ancient Nile. It was taken into exile by the Acadians ; it was sung into battle by the heroes of Châteauguay ; and the story is told of the quick response made by the 65th Battalion in the late Northwest campaign to General Strange who, on hearing a soldier complain of the weary march, said Ah ! mes braves !

Malbroucke s'en va-t-en guerre,
Ne sait quand reviendra :

in an instant the men took up the gay refrain and the march continued without a murmur.

Little wonder that the poets and composers of all times have acknowledged the power of the folksong. The collections of the "grand siècle" were filled with the "airs de cour," and the separation of town and country songs was then complete; yet the insight of genius prompted Molière to choose

J'aime mieux ma mie, ô gué !

which comes nearest to the folksong, for the "vieille chanson," of which le misanthrope says—

Ne voyez-vous pas que cela vaut bien mieux
Que ces colifichets dont le bon sens murmure,
Et que la passion parle là toute pure ?

And, at a time when folklore was still more discredited in high places, we find Voltaire himself exclaiming—

O l'heureux temps que celui de ces fables.

On court, hélas ! après la vérité,
Ah ! croyez-moi, l'erreur a son mérite.

In the present century, French writers, from George Sand to Pierre Loti, vie with each other in doing honour to the folksong. Readers of 'Pêcheur d'Islande' will remember how Sylvestre and Le gros Yann, while fishing throughout the endless Iceland day, sang

Jean-François de Nantes, Jean-François, Jean-François.

Those who have read 'Mon Frère Yves' must have noticed the fine effect with which an invocation to La Bonne Sainte Anne—the Guardian Angel of the Sea—is given in the very words of *Les Trois Marins de Groix*—

La maman qui s'en est allée
Prier la grande Sainte-Anne-d'Auray :
'Bonne Sainte, rendez-moi mon fils !'
La Bonne Sainte-Anne, elle lui a dit :
'Tu le retrouveras en paradis.'

Il vente,

C'est le vent de la mer qui nous tourmente.²⁸

And it must have been with a burden of some love-song of "La Belle France" in his mind, that M. Fréchette wrote to La Louisianaise :

Je sais une ville riieuse,
Aux enivrements infinis,
Qui, fantasque et mystérieuse,
Règne sur ces climats bénis ;
Ville où l'orange et la grenade
Parfument chaque promenade ;
Où, tous les soirs, les amoureux
Chantent la sérénade
Sous des balcons heureux.

But poets have done more than acknowledge the power of folksong ; they have felt its inspiration and transformed its spirit into their own creations. Its influence may be seen throughout the whole of Homer. One of its saddest tales has been retold by Victor Hugo in the story of "Petit Paul," who, with Dante's Anselmuccio and Shakespeare's Arthur will live forever in the poetry of pity. Its ballads of the Borders have inspired Scott, Rossetti, Swinburne, William Morris and many another ; the ballad of *Chevy Chase* stirred Sidney—the flower of Elizabethan Chivalry—more than the trumpet-call to arms ; and the greatest writer of the century bears witness to the hold its vivid simplicity had upon his imagination : "the unsophisticated man," says Goethe, "is more the master of direct, effective expression in few words than he who has received a regular literary education." Everyone knows the folksong, which in dialect begins

Min moder de mi slach't,

that Gretchen sings in prison ; and it is not hard to see that Goethe has poured the essence of the true German *volkslied* into her spinning-song—

Meine Ruh' ist hin,
Mein Herz ist schwer ;
Ich finde sie nimmer
Und nimmermehr.

We may find plenty of apt examples of the comparative treatment of a common theme by folksong and by lettered poetry in France. The *Lovers' metamorphoses* is an interesting case in point ; for here we can set our Canadian variants²⁷ beside the French ones,²⁸ and then compare both with the poetry of Mistral and the music of Gounod.

But we need not push our investigations on this head any further, especially as no one denies the influence which folksong has always had upon the poetry of art. Before leaving this part of my subject, however, I should like to recommend anyone desiring an object lesson on the inspiration of folksong, to read the last six pages of Part I. in M. Tiersot's "Histoire de la Chanson Populaire," for in them he will find all that is necessary to prove that the *Marseillaise*, both in words and music, is, in reality, nothing else than a folksong "writ large."

Turning now to the different forms of folksong, we naturally begin with the nursery. Here we find the truest of all conservatives in the children, who hand down the traditional rhymes from generation to generation, with a marvellous fidelity unknown to their elders. The most primitive forms of folkverse are probably of onomatopœic origin, and the little folks, who could almost make a whole nursery rhyme out of this one portentous word, preserve the traces of this origin at every turn : with their poets the sound is an echo to itself—

Un l, un l—Ma tante Michel ;
Un l, un um—Cagl, Cajum ;
Ton pled bourdon,—José Simon ;
Griffor, Pandor,—Ton nez dehors.²⁹

Other primitive forms survive in the refrains of more modern ballads, like the slogan of Hawick

Teribus y teri Odin

which is a curious Pagan invocation and now belongs to a famous Border riding-song. Others again are to be found in all kinds of trade-songs, like the ancient songs for grinding, weaving and reaping, or those specially composed to be sung by the rowers in the galleys. These last were doubtless like those in vogue among boatmen all the world over: the Sonaris when wading and hauling sing a sort of "Cheerily my boys," with a chorus of "Yoho Ràm"; the Malagasy canoemen chime in with an equally meaningless chorus of "Hé! misy vâ" at regular intervals³¹; and our own voyageurs have plenty of choruses like "Ma, luron, lurette," which have no pretension to any definite meaning at all, and several others whose meaning it is hard for the non-elect to understand; for instance,

Tortille morfil,
Arrangeur de faucilles,
Tribouille marteau,
Bon soir, lutin!³²

Many entire rhymes are almost as primitive in form, though a little clearer in meaning, whether they are rounds for dancing like

Dans ma main droite je tiens rosier,³³

or enumeratives like

C'est Pinson avec Cendrouille,³⁴

or cumulatives like our old nursery rhyme about the cow with the crumpled horn that tossed the dog that worried the cat whose actions, in their turn, were the result of a long train of events. The chief points to notice in all these primitive forms of verse are that they are in no sense literary, but dependent for their very existence on the game, or dance, or other action they accompany; and that they are always of less importance than the music. The little value attached to the meaning of the words is strikingly illustrated by the Kookies of Northern Cachar and the Watch-andies of Australia, who both sing in unknown dialects;³⁵ and little habitants can hardly attach much meaning to the words of the nursery rhyme, *un i, un l*, quoted above.

The popular *Ballad* may be generally taken as the typical form of the folksong. As their name shows, all ballads were originally danced as well as sung. A mediæval ballad of Poitou has this refrain—

Alavi, alavie, jalous,
Lassaz non, lassaz non
Ballar entre non, entre non;³⁶

and peasants almost always use some sort of appropriate action up to the present time. I have seen the habitants in the back country of Temis-

couata using a great deal of dramatic action in their songs, and I particularly noticed one of them who danced and sang a couple of waggish variants of *Malbroucke*. The refrain is the chief connecting link between the ballad and the simpler forms, and was often danced to after the ballad itself had lost its appropriate action. Refrains are found in every possible form, sometimes rising to the importance of a Greek chorus and sometimes represented only by a musical accompaniment hummed in the bass during the singing of the solo. This peculiar running accompaniment is common in the folksongs of the most diverse peoples; and I remember a chance illustration of its wide diffusion which may be worth mentioning. At the Quebec Carnival Concert of 1894, as, on hearing the hummed accompaniment of a well-known Canadian folksong, I was turning to remark the likeness to the bass accompaniments I had heard hummed by a Zulu choir, I found that my neighbour was turning to tell me how much the same thing reminded her of the songs she had heard sung all over Italy.

The refrain is one of the most distinctive marks of the ballad-form, and when we find songs like

Voici le temps et la saison,³⁶

or

Je me suis mis au rang d'aimer,³⁷

without any, we may generally class them with ballads, because they would bear the addition of one without any incongruity. But a refrain in itself is not enough to make a ballad, and its presence in even the earliest verse cannot be cited as proof of a popular origin; as a matter of fact, it is curious to observe in this connection, that the oldest refrain known in English poetry occurs in the Lament of Deor, which is not a folksong at all, but an Anglo-Saxon lyric written twelve hundred years ago.³⁸

In its metre the Canadian ballad as a rule conforms to the fourteen-syllabled type, which Nature seems to have set up as a master-model for most peoples to follow. On this point Mr. Gagnon remarks: ³⁹ "La longueur du vers populaire est souvent de quatorze syllabes ou même davantage. Chaque fois alors que la rime est masculine—car les rimes parfaites s'y rencontrent quelque fois—la césure est invariablement féminine, ou, plus exactement, sourde. Conformément à l'usage, ces sortes de vers ont été, dans ce recueil, brisés à la césure; ainsi les deux vers :

Par derrière chez mon père—lui ya-t-un bois joli ;
Le rossignol y chante et le jour et la nuit,

ont été écrits sur quatre lignes :

Par derrière' chez mon père
Lui ya-t-un bois joli ;
Le rossignol y chante
Et le jour et la nuit."

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The *Complainte*⁴⁰ is nearer to modern poetry in that its musical accompaniment is often only a sort of intoning, and its action is no more than any good reciter would make use of. And yet it arose in the Middle Ages, when music, action and verse were inseparably connected in the folksong. But its origin was different from that of the ordinary folksong; it was often a reshaping, in pithier verse, of the interminable *chanson de geste*, which was a transformation of the *cantilène*, which, in its turn, occupied a somewhat anomalous place between the *epic* and the *legendary lay*. Above all, it is a narrative, and, though nearly always on a pious or a tragic theme, is not at all the same thing as a lament or elegy. In the pious vein, Mr. Gagnon gives us⁴¹ the admirable *Complainte d'Adam et d'Eve*, which is the fine Canadian variant of the folksong story of the fall of man. We may compare it with a Provençal version, *Leis gravis des meissouniers*,⁴² and trace its descent from the *cantilène* by noting its affinities with the rhymed legends of *Jésus-Christ et les deux hôteses*, *Marie Magdeleine*, *Sainte-Marguerite*, the *Complainte des trois petits enfants*, or that of *Saint-Nicolas*.⁴³ In the tragic vein, the verse more nearly approaches the ballad form, but the music still keeps the tone of a higher seriousness. No doubt it is partly owing to the serious tone of its direct narrative style that it has kept its traditional form so long; but it is certainly still more owing to the simple austerity of its musical accompaniment that, even in far-off Canada, *Marianson, dame jolie*,⁴⁴ is still an old-world *complainte* sung with all the

Stretched metre of an antique song.

It is a somewhat rough-and-ready way of classifying folksongs to simply group them together as *complaintes*, as *ballads*, or as what, for want of a generic name for the simpler forms, we might call *folk-ditties*; but, as I shall note any peculiarities in individual examples as they occur in the course of our inquiries, this grouping may be sufficiently exact for a general survey. As a matter of fact, too, any attempt to explore the maze of by-paths and cross-roads in a hurry would certainly lead us, more often than not, into places where we could not see the wood for the trees.

IV.

MANNERS AND CUSTOMS.

In all times and places the folk have found a pleasant escape from the dullness of the daily round by singing at their work. In Russia they sing as they sew at the "besyedy" of a winter's evening;⁴⁵ in Roumania the best singer stands in the middle of the circle of spinners, the rest joining in the chorus;⁴⁶ in Flanders—at Bruges, Steenvoorde and other towns—the lacemakers have songs called *tellingen*, which serve the double purpose of helping on the work and keeping tally of the number of meshes

done,"—much as, in the military exercise known as the "physical drill," the music not only enlivens it all, but serves to mark the duration of the separate "practices" as well. I wonder how many songs go to the making of a piece of Canadian homespun—l'étoffe du pays; I am sure no spinner, "en filant ma quenouille," could truthfully say

Je le mène bien
Mon dévidoi',

if she did not sing as she worked. As a rule, work-songs refer as much to other callings as to the singer's own; and most of them have nothing at all to do with work—except to lighten it—but are variations on the endless theme of love. Lord Dalhousie's canoemen, as they paddled, used to sing the *Je le mène bien mon dévidoi'*,⁴³ just quoted, which is, of course, a spinning-song; but only as regards the refrain, for the song itself is one of the many variants of *Cécilia*.⁴⁰ So here we have a sea-song adapted to the spinning-wheel, and then sung in this adapted form by "voyageurs." The great thing always is to get a suitable rhythmical form. Tallemant des Réaux tells a story of a Huguenot arquebus-maker who sang as he worked,

Appelez Robinette,
Qu'elle vienne ici-bas.

The well-known theologian, Pierre Dumoulin, happening to pass by, remonstrated with him and advised him to sing psalms instead; the man, however, knew his own business best—"Voyez comme ma lime va viste en chantant *Robinette*, et comme elle va lentement en chantant *Lève le cœur, ouvre l'oreille*. It was more a matter of sound than sense with the worthy arquebus-maker, as it is with the Savoyard sweep, the words of whose cry, "avec sa bizarre vocalise descendante,"⁴⁵

Ramenez-ci, ramenez-là—ah!
La cheminée du haut en bas—

are not separated from even those of

Who will buy my sweet lavender

by anything like the immense difference separating their respective airs. In the words set to trumpet- and bugle-calls the sense is even more an echo to the sound; in fact, the words owe their very existence to the call, as in *la soupe*, which has inspired "le lignard" to sing,

C'est pas d' la soupe; c'est du rata,
C'est assez bon pour le soldat;
Pour le soldat français;

and Tommy Atkins to make up his British variant,

Officers' wives have puddings and pies,
And soldiers' wives have skilly.

Weddings, of course, come in for their share of attention in Mr. Gagnon's collection. The folksongs proper to the *fêtes des noces* are

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serious enough as a general thing, witness *À la santé de ces jeunes mariés*; but the other songs popular at weddings have been so universally distinguished for their non-Christian tone, that, together with the equally popular Pagan dirges, they have rarely failed to draw down upon them the anathema of the Church. In 650 the Council of Châlons had to threaten song-loving women with excommunication—to say nothing of the cat-o'-nine-tails; and St. Augustin speaks of the “cantica nefaria” which were sung and danced to, even upon the tombs of the saints!⁵¹ The strange mixture of gravity and *gauloiserie* at weddings is well illustrated in the Gascon songs,⁵² which are sung on the way to and from church, at the feast, and even in the bridal chamber itself. It is interesting to notice what an old-time view the Canadian songs take of the sanctity of betrothal: Petite Jeanneton evidently thinks that having her “petit cœur en gage” is no light affair; but she does not take so stern a view of the situation as the Bretons, who say—“Quiconque est fiancée trois fois sans se marier va brûler en enfer.”⁵³

The Canadians have no dirges; at least neither Mr. Gagnon nor Dr. Larue say a word about them; and this is perhaps natural enough, for the popular dirge is Pagan to the core, and the Canadian folksinger takes an unusually Christian view of death.

Nor should we suppose from Mr. Gagnon's collection that they had any war-songs either. There are, indeed, scattered references to war; but that is all. The universally-known deserter sings,

Un jour l'envie m'a pris
De désertir de France;⁵⁴

“les enfants sans souci” are soldiers, but they are doing nothing more warlike than drinking “pots et pintes, vidant les verres aussi,” and doing it in barracks, too.⁵⁵ In *Gai le rosier*, the singer's lover is a prisoner of war in Holland,⁵⁶ and Cadieux refers to the bush-fights with the Iroquois; but none of these are war-songs in any proper meaning of the term. Dr. Larue gives us two genuine Red River war-songs, both composed by Pierrieche Falcon,⁵⁷ who was one of the Bois-Brûlés of 1816, and fought the English as vigorously in arms as in verse. His songs are full of local colour, of the glory of the Bois-Brûlés and of the defeat of the English—or rather of “les Arkanyes”; they have a spice of *gauloiserie* and the all-essential lilt, but nevertheless Pierrieche Falcon, “ce faiseur de chansons,” is many degrees below the Tyrtan level. As for military topical songs, like *C'est la Casquette du père Bugeaud*,⁵⁸ which was composed in Algeria and sung at Inkermann, they are practically unknown in Canada. When Canadian troops sing in camp or on the march, they choose a song like *En roulant ma boule*, which has a splendid swing, or one like Napoleon's favourite *Malbroucke*, in which war plays little more than a nominal part.

Chivalry, as we might expect with the scions of a gallant race, has

left its characteristic mark on some of the best-known Canadian love-songs. This is hardly surprising, when we remember that the love-song, as we know it, owes its very existence to chivalry, and that true chivalry is the fittest theme of song :

Servants d'amour, regardez doucement,
Aux échafauds anges de paradis ;
Lors jouerez fort et joyeusement,
Et vous serez honorés et chéris.

Knights, lords, princes and kings are all familiar figures to us. In *En roulant ma boule* the "canard blanc" is shot by "le fils du roi";⁵⁹ another "fils du roi" hears the shepherdess singing "comme une demoiselle" by the famous "Pont d'Avignon";⁶⁰ "trois filles d'un Prince" are asleep beneath the "pommier doux"⁶¹ and they wake to sing, in truly chivalric style—

Nos amants sont en guerre,
Ils combattent pour nous ;

"trois cavaliers barons" rescue the distressed damsel who rewards them only with a song, saying—

Mon petit cœur en gage
N'est pas pour un baron.⁶²

Kings themselves—like Cophetua who married the beggar-maid, and Cormac who loved the Fair Eithne—think rustic courtship by no means beneath them. When

Le roi, par la fenêtre,
saw three "filles à marier" pass by, he hastened to join them, and then

Le roi prit la plus jeune,
Dans la dans' l'a menée ;
A chaque tour de danse
Il voulait l'embrasser.⁶³

Even the good bourgeois goes a-courting like a knight :

Dans Paris ya-t'une brune
Plus bell' que le jour ;
Sont trois bourgeois de la ville
Qui lui font l'amour ;

and, when they are planning how best to win her, the youngest says—

Je me frai faire une selle
Avec tous ses atours ;
Et j'irai de ville en ville
Toujours à son nom.⁶⁴

Then we have a whole complainte, *Marianson*, breathing the very spirit of the Middle Age ; and, beside these, there are many other vestiges of the age of chivalry remaining, sometimes in a phrase and sometimes only in a single word ; but, perhaps, enough has been said to show that, in

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the songs of New France, there still remains much of the picturesqueness of the Old.

There are very few songs in Mr. Gagnon's collection, apart from those connected with fêtes and ceremonial customs, which contain any important remnants of popular myths. The dancing of the sun at Easter is not mentioned, nor are some other beliefs still, or up to quite recent times, current in the country. But Marianne, when her donkey has been eaten by a wolf, tries to pass off the one given her by the miller as the old one with a new skin, for, in accordance with time-honoured custom, all good asses changed their skin at Michaelmas.⁶⁵ Then, in *Digue Dindaine*,⁶⁶ the sheep dance on the green in the most approved fashion; and Pinson and Cendrouille,⁶⁷ when at their wit's end to furnish a wedding feast, are helped out of their difficulty by the dog, the crow and the rat, each animal bringing some suitable dish with him. There is no lack of talking birds; sometimes to tell inconvenient gossip—bilingual gossip, too, both in French and Latin—as in *Cécilia*; ⁶⁸ sometimes to recommend matrimony, like "le rossignolet" in *J'ai cueilli la belle Rose*; ⁶⁹ and sometimes to help the weaker sex to abuse the stronger, like the quail in *Mon beau ruban gris*.⁷⁰ The old belief in the materiality of the soul is satirically alluded to in the compendious *Malbroucke*:

On vit voler son âme
A travers les lauriers; ⁷¹

and metempsychosis of a sort is pressed into the service of love in *Si tu te mets anguille*⁷² and *J'ai fait une maîtresse*.⁷³ The voyageur who sings "bon soir, lutin"⁷⁴ may think twice before encountering the powers of goblindom, and, perhaps, some fishermen of the Lower St. Lawrence may have more than a suspicion that, in singing "blanc, blanc loup-marin," ⁷⁵ they are referring to mermaids or other uncanny beings far more dangerous than the timid seal. In *En roulant ma boule*⁷⁶ there is the wonderful bird producing jewels from its eyes and gold and silver from its beak, just as mythical beasts do in all other countries; and we can hardly attribute the prodigious convulsion of Nature produced by a carpenter's sitting down to purely natural causes—

En s'asseyant il fit un bond;
Qui fit trembler mer et poissons,
Et les cailloux qui sont au fond.⁷⁷

Then there is the miller, who tricked the Devil into a flour-sack, which was tied to the revolving mill wheel, much to his Satanic Majesty's discomfort; ⁷⁸ but the only song the action of which turns entirely upon supernatural agency is that of the "plus savante" rival, whose power over the elements enables her to supplant "la fille du roi":

Elle fait neiger, elle fait gréler,
Elle fait le vent qui vente;
Elle fait reluire le soleil
A minuit dans sa chambre.⁷⁹

Turning to songs connected with Christian festivals, we are at once struck by the persistence with which both song and fête have kept the form of Pagan moulds. Usually, when a Pagan custom was too strong to be killed, it was adapted to Christian purposes; and this practice became so universal, that Villemarqué's saying that the cross was planted on the dolmen, is as applicable to the whole of Christendom as it is to Brittany: he might have gone a step further, to say that the cross itself is almost as much Pagan as Christian. The mixture of the two beliefs in folksongs is very curious. No conversion to Christianity has ever succeeded in preventing Paganism from living at least a legendary life, and often a life of real power. At the present day in Tinnevely the Anglican missionaries cannot stamp out caste among the native Christians, nor prevent their wearing the *tâli*, a golden wedding-token, with the cross on one side and a figure of Lakshmi, the Hindoo goddess of Fortune, on the other.⁶⁰ In a Portuguese ballad the king hearing a lovely song asks "Is it an angel in Heaven or a Siren in the sea?" Whole nations have adopted patron saints, not because of their sanctity, but from their real or imaginary likeness to popular heathen deities: no Northern folk would ever have had anything to do with St. George, if his fabled fight with the Dragon had not resembled that of the mighty Thor with the Midgard-Serpent.⁶¹

The adaptation of the old to the new is well seen in such songs as those till lately current in Canada in connection with *La Guignolée*.⁶² The *Guignolée* is of Druidic origin, and probably was in some way connected with the ceremony of cutting the sacred mistletoe at the winter solstice; at all events, it was part of a very popular sacred custom, performed by the high priest of an immensely powerful class,⁶³ a class of immemorial antiquity even in the days of Cæsar, and it has come down to us in Canada, through centuries of Old-World change, with enough of its ancient form to remind us of its original office in the sacred forest rites. Among the superstitions alluded to in the songs of *La Guignolée*, is the curious belief in the efficacy of warming a woman's feet to give her a good child-birth; a practice which Mr. Gagnon thinks originated from propitiatory sacrifices, for he quotes⁶⁴ from the "*Soirées Canadiennes*": "Il est probable que ces vers étranges :

" Nous prendrons la fille aînée,
Nous y ferons chauffer les pieds !"

sont un reste d'allusions aux sacrifices humains de l'ancien culte gaulois." In Canada *La Guignolée* has always been connected with Christmas alms-giving, the singers making a "quête" in search of all sorts of things, money included, which they afterwards distributed among the parish poor. Sometimes, if the "quêteurs" were unsuccessful at a house, they shouted uncomplimentary couplets, reflecting on the stinginess of the

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host and hostess ; but they never sang, I believe, as the unsuccessful May-day "quêteurs" still do in Champagne—¹⁵

J'veus souhaitons autant d'enfants
Qu'y a de pierrettes dans les champs ;

but then the children of Old France were never worth a hundred acres a dozen !

The great religious round, *Il n'y a qu'un seul Dieu*,¹⁶ is even more interesting than *La Guignolée*. It is danced as well as sung—"Les danseurs se comptent d'abord à haute voix, de façon à ce que chacun d'eux se trouve être désigné par un nombre pair ou impair. Le chant commence ensuite et la chaîne se met à tourner. On tourne ainsi constamment, tantôt à droite, tantôt à gauche ; mais quand les chanteurs en sont au sixième couplet, et chaque fois que ce sixième couplet se répète, tout le monde s'arrête, et, pendant que l'on chante : 'Six urnes placées, remplies,' les danseurs désignés par un nombre pair se tournent, d'abord à droite, puis à gauche, et font à leurs voisins de profonds saluts. Ceux que désigne un nombre impair font la même cérémonie en sens inverse : le tout avec la gravité d'une cérémonie religieuse. Puis lorsque l'on chante : 'A Cana, en Galilée,' les danseurs recommencent à tourner." This round is a French translation of a Latin imitation of a Druidic *Series*, used in the education of novices. The Christian round, as given by Mr. Gagnon, concludes thus :¹⁷

Il y a douze apôtres,
Il y a onze cents mill' vierges,
Il y a dix commandements,
Il y a neuf chœurs des anges,
Il y a huit béatitudes,
Il y a sept sacrements,
Six urnes placées, remplies,
A Cana, en Galilée,
Il y a cinq livres de Moïse,
Il y a quatre évangélistes,
Il y a trois grands patriarches,
Il y a deux Testaments,
Il n'y a qu'un seul Dieu.

The Druidic *Series*, as given by Villemarqué,¹⁸ is summed up thus :

Douze mois et douze signes,
Onze prêtres armés,
Dix vaisseaux ennemis,
Neuf petites mains blanches,
Huit vents,
Sept soleils,
Six petits enfants de cire,
Cinq zones terrestres,
Quatre pierres à aiguiser,
Trois parties dans le monde,
Deux beufs,

Pas de sorts pour le nombre un ;
 La Nécessité unique,
 Le Trépas, père de la Douleur ;
 Rien avant, rien de plus.

"La Nécessité unique" is identified with Death—the Breton "Ankon," the forgetting of all, not unlike the Nirvana of the Buddhists. "Les deux bœufs" are those of Hu-Gadaru, an ancient Breton god. In the "Quatre pierres à aiguiser" we have a Breton variant of the Welsh whetting-stone, which sharpened the swords of the brave, so that they killed an enemy with a single stroke, but reduced the swords of cowards to dust. The "Six enfants de cire" refer to the ancient and universal practice of witchcraft, not yet extinct, by which an enemy is made to fall sick and die through the melting of his waxen image. The connection of this with our modern habit of burning unpopular public characters in effigy is obvious. The number seven, like three and twelve, was peculiarly sacred: here we have seven elements, seven suns and seven moons; three beginnings and three endings, alike for man and for the sacred oak; twelve months in the year and twelve signs in the Zodiac. The "Huit feux, avec le grand feu" refer to the seven sacred fires perpetually burning in the temples and to the great fire, the Bel-tan, which the ancient Irish lit in May in honour of the Sun-god. Here again we have a modern variant in the *Feux de St. Jean*, which were lit on the Island of Orleans as late as 1810.⁸⁹ In the "Dix vaisseaux ennemis" and the "onze prêtres armés" we may have a reference to the naval war in Armorica, when Cæsar put the Senators and Druids to the sword.⁹⁰ The respective ages of these two rounds cannot be determined; but the Christian must be later than the conversion of Armorica in the sixth century, and the Druidic somewhat earlier, and both must have their origin in a Pagan past so dimly remote that we cannot now discern a single feature of it clearly.

I give Villemarqué's notes as they stand for what they are worth, not supposing it necessary to warn my readers that the *Barzaz-Breiz* has fallen from its high estate of authenticity. If we want authentic Breton folksongs, we must go to the *Gwerziou* and *Sonniou* of M. Luzel, where we shall find a scrupulous exactitude, not excelled even in Professor Child's monumental collection of the English and Scottish ballads. The *Barzaz-Breiz* is something quite different from these: it is not a faithful collection of folksongs edited from unpublished manuscripts; still less one that is faithful to oral tradition, for the Bretons repudiate all knowledge of its texts; nor yet is it a trustworthy literary history. But it is not to be thrown aside as completely useless, because it is no longer found to be what it was once taken for by anyone. It is a store-house of information, picturesquely arranged for literary effect; in fact, a sort of historical novel on a large scale—belonging to the same class of Celtic

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literature as the works of "Ossian" Macpherson and Sir Samuel Ferguson—and, if it had only been published in its true place, like Ferguson's poems, instead of in a false one, like Macpherson's, its real value as an interesting and stimulating version of the genuine spirit of old Celtic poetry would never have been called in question.

V.

CHRISTIANITY.

Christianity, pure and simple, counts for very little in folklore of any kind, and, perhaps, for less in verse than in prose: the noëls are non-popular and the songs connected with Christian fêtes and ceremonies have come down strongly imbued with Paganism and cast in Pagan moulds.

Mr. Gagnon gives us, besides the noël *D'où viens-tu bergère*,⁹¹ the two complaintes, *Adam et Eve*⁹² and *Le Juif Errant*,⁹³ and *Cadieux's death-song*,⁹⁴ the first and last of which are inspired by Christianity throughout; Cadieux's song, with its heroic ring and fervent piety, being just what we might expect from that age of Christian martyrs, "sans peur et sans reproche." The legend of the *Wandering Jew*, with its many variants, has a folklore history almost as strange as the adventures themselves; but we cannot enter upon it here. Beside these we may place two voyageur songs as given by Dr. Larue: *Le chantier d'Abacis*,⁹⁵ a strain of Christian resignation and thanksgiving; and the song of the *Christian voyageur*⁹⁶ in which the singer points his morals in a way which would be highly diverting if it was not so transparently sincere. Beginning with a caution against the dangers besetting the way of the voyageur, he breaks off to tell us that even Christians sometimes use strong language:

Mille fois il maudit son sort
Dans le cours du voyage.

After this comes a warning against the wiles of the Evil One:

Quand tu seras sur ces traverses

Tu es ici près du démon
Qui guette ta pauvre âme;

and then a moral, drawn from the likeness of mosquitoes to the Powers of Darkness, which all good anglers ought to thoroughly appreciate:

Si les maringouins te réveillent
De leurs chansons,
Ou te chatouillent l'oreille
De leurs aiguillons,
Apprends, cher voyageur, alors,
Que c'est le Diable
Qui chante tout autour de ton corps
Pour avoir ta pauvre âme.

Next comes an exhortation to prayer :

Quand tu seras dans ces rapides,
 Très dangereux,
 Ah ! prie la Vierge Marie,
 Fais-lui des vœux ;
 Alors lance-toi dans ces flots
 Avec hardiesse,
 Et puis dirige ton canot
 Avec beaucoup d'adresse.

Excellent advice ; which reminds us of that given by Oliver Cromwell to the soldiers of the New Model, when they were about to ford a river in presence of the enemy : "Trust in the Lord—and keep your powder dry." Prayer is again recommended at the end of the song, as the only talisman against the perils of flood and field :

Ami, veux-tu marcher par terre
 Dans ces grands bois ;
 Les sauvages te feront la guerre
 En vrai soursnois.
 Si tu veux braver leur fureur,
 Sans plus attendre,
 Prie alors de tout ton cœur.
 Ton ange de te défendre.

Thus we can see for ourselves that there really is a class of purely Christian folksongs, and that Canada has produced some fine examples of it. But these very Canadian examples serve to prove how sterile this class has always been, even under the most favouring conditions ; for, though Mr. Gagnon and Dr. Laue are the last collectors in the world to neglect a folksong of Christian origin, though they have collected in a country conspicuous for the religious character of its foundation and famous, throughout its entire history, for the extraordinary zeal, devotion, discipline and wide-spread influence of an omnipresent priesthood, yet, in spite of all these advantages, the specimens they give us are few in number and of no great intrinsic value. "Le nombre de nos chansons populaires est incalculable" ; in Normandy the songs were as plentiful as the apples ; and, in all English speaking countries, the Borders have long been celebrated as the land of song ; yet, neither in the French tongue nor in the English, neither in the Old World nor in the New, neither by priest nor by puritan has the folksong ever been converted. If a universal collection of folksongs were made, and the different classes placed in order of genuine popularity, it would probably be found, that in the class of purely Christian origin, Canada stood an undisputed first ; but it is quite certain that this class itself would be the very last of all.

VI.

HUMOUR.

There is another influence beside those already mentioned which greatly affects the characteristic tone of Canadian folksongs and which, if misunderstood, makes many of them the veriest 'caviare.' This is that blending of a witty humour with a natural turn for satire, so peculiarly French that we must give up trying to find an English name for it and call it simply *gauloiserie*. Not that we are wholly without descriptions of some such kind of humour. In a delightful little preface to Mr. Locker's volume of society verse, Mr. Austin Dobson gives us a very good idea of the British variant of this peculiar natural trait—but, variants are variants, and are apt to have elusively subtle distinctions about them :

Apollo made, one April day,
A new thing in the rhyming way ;
Its turn was neat, its wit was clear,
It wavered 'twixt a smile and tear ;
Then Momus gave a touch satiric,
And it became a "London Lyric."

And then, if we take this refrain of de Rougemont's we may get still nearer to an insight into the true "raison d'être" of *gauloiserie*—

Dans cette vie
Qu'il tout varie,
Où chaque pas mène au tombeau,
Portons gaiement notre fardeau ;"

but let us stop here ; if we go on trying to get an insight into what *gauloiserie* really is, by taking it to pieces and examining its component parts, we shall defeat our own object ; for its essence does not depend upon the nature of its parts, but upon the way in which they are blent together into a living whole. Just as a joke that has to be explained is no joke at all, so *gauloiserie* is no real influence except to those whose sense of humour enables them to see and feel it in their studies from the life.

And in making a study from the life we have to remember another characteristic French trait—the social quality, which is so strongly developed in the whole nation and which, with its great power of assimilation, has gained for France, through her men of letters, the title of the Interpreter of Europe. All the world acknowledges the social virtues of French song—even perfidious Albion takes pleasure in "the gay French refrain," as she generally calls it.

And there is yet another point to note here—that we must speak of *gauloiserie* only with reference to the French language, for wherever a different tongue has survived within the borders of France, there the sad tone may still be heard above all others. The Breton fisherman can feel a passion akin to that of the wild, mysterious Flamenco songs of

Spain, and a Breton maiden can sympathize with her love-forsaken Sicilian sister who pined away and died after being serenaded with *dispetti* and *sfige*, songs of challenging suspicion, affront and ridicule.⁹⁸ The Flemish lover sings his song because he cannot rest until he has done it, although he knows beforehand the pain that the singing of it will surely cost him :

Ik vinde my bedwongen dat ik zingen moet,
Ja, dat ik zingen moet,
Een liedeken van minne die my treuren doet,
Ja, die my treuren doet.⁹⁹

The French themselves—les vieux Gaulois—take things differently. The Franks of Chlodion were so intent upon enjoying the songs and dances at the marriage-feast of one of their great chiefs, that they never discovered the approach of Ætius till his legionaries charged down on them ; and so the Romans won their first battle in Gaul.¹⁰⁰ It has been said :

Toujours content et sans souci,
C'est l'ordre de Crambambuli ;

and of this jolly order are the *gaulois* songs of Canada. One might suppose that in love, at all events, there would be little enough of the "sans souci." But the French and Canadian Cupids are rarely blind. I do not mean to say that either French or Canadian love-songs are strangers to melancholy altogether—Perrette¹⁰¹ knows only too well that sometimes

Les enfants sans souci
Ils sont bien loin d'ici ;

much less do I mean to say that they are strangers to the faithfulness of lovers—does not the princess scout the idea that love can hang upon the issue of the fight, and is only to be given to the victors :

S'ils gagnent la bataille
Ils auront nos amours.
— " Qu'ils perdent ou qu'ils gagnent
Ils les auront toujours." ¹⁰²

But I do believe that there is little, if any, exaggeration in M. Tiersot's remarks upon the general influence of *gauloiserie*.¹⁰³ "La satire est tellement au fond de notre esprit national qu'elle étend son influence jusque sur nos chansons d'amour. Rarement on trouvera dans ces dernières, une déclaration d'amour vraiment sincère et sans arrière-pensée, un accord absolu de deux cœurs qui s'aiment."

However unwelcome to the lover of poetry when it comes in as an intruder, *gauloiserie* is unrivalled in its proper sphere, whether in Canada or in France. Native Canadian *gauloiserie* is very little behind the French ; witness the amusing account of how

Dans l'comté de Rinfouski,
A l'élection nouvelle,
Jacquot Hug's s'est présente.¹⁰⁴

A sharper flavour is to be found in

and

Quand le mari s'en vint du bois,¹⁰⁵

Mon mari est ben malade ;¹⁰⁶

but the quintessence of *gauloiserie* is in *Malbroucke*.¹⁰⁷ Malbroucke himself, like his predecessor the Duc de Guise, is burnt in effigy with all the mock-heroics possible. The "beau page" tells "Madame" how the great man was followed to his grave by "quatre-z-officiers" :

L'un portait sa cuirasse,
L'autre son bouclier,
L'un portait son grand sabre,
L'autre ne portait rien ;

and French illustrators have not left us in any doubt as to how the chief mourners carried their burdens—¹⁰⁸ but *Malbroucke* is not to be appreciated in extracts.

To be gay and Gallic and to sing *Malbroucke* with gusto ought to be enough to prove Canadians true heirs of the singers of the "gay refrain," who, in their turn, are heirs of the Gallic legionaries that, in the time of Julius Cæsar, are said to have borne the lark upon their helmets as the distinctive emblem of their race.¹⁰⁹ But there is a reverse to all this. The Gallic funeral ceremonies of *Malbroucke* seem very like a modern variant of the mediæval *Dance of Death*. Both old and new owe their popularity to the same cause ; and he who runs may read the moral of both ; which is, that the great King Death will mete out equal justice to all alike, to high and low, to rich and poor, to victor and to vanquished. What a satisfaction to be able to rejoice in the foreknowledge of this common doom ! Professor Pellegrini tells us¹¹⁰ that this guiding inscription appears upon the wall on the road to the cemetery of Galliate : "Via al vero comunismo." And *Malbroucke*, for all it does it with a smiling face, points out the self-same way ; so, perhaps, *gauloiserie* may be somewhat grimmer than it seems, and its refrains not, after all, so very gay.

VII.

LULLABIES.

Having briefly noted the general characteristics of the songs as found in our texts, let us now turn to a few particular classes of them. To begin at the beginning, the *lullabies* must be considered first ; then the *nursery rhymes* of childhood, followed by the *love-songs* of youth ; and lastly, we must by no means forget to notice the most typically Canadian class of all—the *songs of the voyageurs*.

The *Lullaby* has all the form and rhythm of a natural simplicity, its burden is made soothing with onomatopœic and reduplicated words, and

the names the nurses give it in every tongue breathe the very spirit of rest and sleep—*né-né* in Dauphiné, *no-no* in the South, *lo-lo* among the Basques are some of the many variants of the universal French *do-do*. Monotony, calm and an ebbing flow of sound are universal : in Berry¹¹¹ the nurse begins with

Dodo, berline,
Sainte Cathérine,

in Dauphiné¹¹² with

Néné petite,
Sainte Marguerite,

in Canada¹¹³ with an invocation to the same saint—

Sainte Marguerite,
Veillez ma pètte ;

and all French nurses sing

Do, do, l'enfant do,
L'enfant dormira tantôt ;

and in every case we hope their singing is attended by the same good fortune—

Et l'enfant qui dort
Fait des rêves d'or.

Monotonous, too, are the variations on the simplest themes ; variations ad infinitum, or rather so far as the nurse's memory and fancy can carry her. All Canadians have been sung to sleep by the chanted story of

C'est la Poulette grise
Qui pond dans l'église,
C'est la Poulette blanche
Qui pond dans les branches ;¹¹⁴

and so on with "Poulettes" of innumerable hues, many seen only in the land of dreams. Assonance plays a great part in cradle songs, and makes even stranger bed-fellows than politics. Its whims and caprices make Alsatian "bonnes" mix bitter things with sweet, in curious fashion ; in the very same song,¹¹⁵ where little girls are put to bed in Heaven itself, we find that little boys are first well whipped and then stuffed into a sack full of toads :

Rägi, Rägi, tropfe,
d'Buawe muass ma klopfen,
d'Maudla kummen is Himmels bett,
d'Buäwa kummen id Grodda seek.

And it is just as full of freaks in Canada :¹¹⁶

Il est midi. Qui-c' qui l'a dit ?
C'est la souris. Ou est-elle ?
Dans la chapelle.—Que fait-elle ?
De la dentelle. Pour qui ?
Pour ces demoiselles.—Combien la vend-elle ?
Trois quarts de sel.

This constant mention of animals shows us what nursery favourites they have always been: witness, *Le Chat à Jeannette*, *La Petit' poule grise*, *Le Bal des Souris* and *Les Nocés du Papillon* for France,¹¹⁷ and for Canada the wedding of *Pinson avec Cendrouille*¹¹⁸ and the unending enumerative which begins with *Une Perdriole*.¹¹⁹

It is strange that Mr. Gagnon gives us no lullabies of the Virgin, unless we can take *D'où viens-tu, bergère*, as one; for they form an important class apart, and are met with in many countries. They are, however, somewhat like the noëls in tone, and often had a common non-popular origin. The famous one with the refrain

Millies tibi laudes canimus
Mille, mille, millies,¹²⁰

could hardly have been of popular composition, even if it had been in some vernacular; but another Latin one¹²¹ might well have been a folksong:

Dormi Jesu, mater ridet,
Quæ tam dulcem somnum videt,
Dormi Jesu blandule.
Si non dormis, mater plorat,
Inter filia cantans orat:
Blande, veni Somnule.

The last line reminds us that lullabies are long-lived beyond most other folksongs and trace their descent from Pagan times. "Blande, veni Somnule" is at least a reminiscence of the direct invocation to Sleep, still common among many folk. The *ὑπναρισματα* of Modern Greece have many such invocations; so have the *som-soms* of Languedoc and Auvergne, like the one beginning,

Som-som, beni, beïï, beni;¹²²

and so, too, have the *souin-souins* of La Bresse:¹²³

Le poupon voudrait bien domir;
Le Souin-souin ne veut pas venir.
Souin-souin, vené, vené, vené;
Souin-souin, vené, vené, donc!

There are no heathen invocations in our Canadian lullabies, but when a habitante calls upon *Sainte-Marguerite*,¹²⁴ she is invoking a favourite saint in the *White Paternoster*.¹²⁵ and, as the *White Paternoster* was invented as a charm against the Evil spirits which could be conjured with a *Black Paternoster* or other magical formula, the connection with a survival of Pagan beliefs is not far to seek. It is curious to observe the number of Christian customs which the folk has pressed into the service of White Magic; even the 'Angelus' has not escaped, the Provençals believing that it was instituted to scare away the evil spirits who might be tempted out by the approach of night!

But, whether of Christian or of Pagan origin, whether in Canada or in other lands, the simple *Berceuse* has all the intimate pathetic charm of one of "Nature's old felicities"; for there is nothing that can take us back to our own first twilight fancies, and to the very infancy of time itself, like a crooning lullaby, whispering of all the little immemorial mysteries of cradleland."

VIII.

NURSERY RHYMES.

Though *Nursery rhymes* belong to a later age of childhood than lullabies, they are really a still simpler form of verse, in fact, a mere jingling accompaniment to the action and air of some sort of game, and never make the slightest pretensions to poetry. Assonance is, of course, most important, and generally plays its pranks to the admiration of all concerned; sometimes, however, opinions differ. To

Ride a cock-hofse to Banbury Cross,

or to be ¹²⁶

A cheval, à cheval, sur la queue d'un original,

or to go

A Paris, à Paris, sur la queue d'un p'tit cheval gris,

or

A Rouen, à Rouen, sur la queue d'un p'tit cheval blanc,

is all very well; but, perhaps, Quebecers might rather remain forever unknown to nursery fame, than be immortalized in the couplet

A Québec, à Québec, sur la queue d'une belette! ¹²⁷

As they have so much in common with lullabies, it is natural enough that nursery rhymes with a suitable rhythm should enjoy an equal popularity in either form; *J'ai tant d'enfants à marier, Ah! qui marierons-nous! C'est le bon vin qui danse, C'est la plus belle de vèans* and many other simple rhymes are sung beside the cradle as well as in the playroom. ¹²⁸

The main feature of interest in all nursery rhymes is the wonderful fidelity with which both words and action have been handed down from generation to generation. A Canadian girl or boy singing

C'est le bon vin qui danse ici, ¹²⁹

reminds us at once, by the single word "vin," that this rhyme originally came from France—whence, indeed, all our nursery rhymes have come. When we hear a reference to "le pont de Nantes" ¹³⁰ or to the more famous "pont d'Avignon" ¹³¹ we know they are singing of France in the olden time. The mention of "l'assemblée d'amour" ¹³² takes us back to the mediæval Courts of Love; in *Le premier jour de Mai* ¹³³ we have a reminiscence of the fêtes for the rite of May; and the couplet

J'ai trouvé le nique du lièvre,
Mais le lièvre n'y était pas, ¹³⁴

now sung in fun by children, might once have been sung in real earnest by some of their ancestors who lived by the chase. Turn where we may, we find ourselves in what has been well called the old curiosity shop of customary lore. English children singing

Eeny, meeny, miny, mo,

are using a variant of

Eene, meene, mieken, mäken,¹³⁵

in which German children still ask their play-fellows to join them in the Teutonic conquest of Celtic Britain:

Kumm will'n beid' ná England gán!

It is easy enough to go back still further. In "Buck, buck, how many horns do I hold up?" we have the lineal descendant of an old Roman game, as described by Petronius Arbiter in the time of Nero:¹³⁶ "Tri-malchio . . . bade the boy get on his back. The boy climbed up and slapped him on the shoulders with his hand, laughing and calling out, "Bucca, Bucca, quot sunt hic?" We can go beyond even this; but probably no one is disposed to deny the claims of the nursery rhyme to, at least, a very respectable pedigree.

IX.

LOVE-SONGS.

Everyone turns to Nature herself for the origin of the *Love-song*; but, to fully appreciate the influences which have moulded it into the form it has taken in Canada, we must remember that the natural tones of love have been modified, first by the pervading *gauloiserie* of France, then by the customs and ideals of mediæval chivalry, and lastly by the peculiarities of Canadian life. Now Nature, of course, needs no discussion, and, as the three modifying influences have been discussed before, we take Canadian love-songs exactly as we find them in Mr. Gagnon's texts and, noting that there they may be somewhat exclusively addressed *virginibus puerisque*, we shall venture to characterize them generally as an almost perfect blend of Nature, chivalry, *gauloiserie* and, what we may, perhaps, be allowed to call for the occasion, *Canadiennerie*.

The *Chanson des Regrets* has no place in Mr. Gagnon's book. There is no *Péronnelle*,¹³⁷ no Young Heiduck to woo and win and ride away,¹³⁸ no Canadian wife to yield to the wiles of the *Demon Lover*,¹³⁹ no Canadian Launcelot and no Canadian Guinevere. The Canadian maiden makes no such confession of the power of love as her Bressian sister:

Que veux-tu que je te donne?
Je t'ai déjà trop donné:
Je t'ai donné une rose,
La plus belle de mes roses
Que j'avais sur mon rosier.¹⁴⁰

Neither does she sing her regrets at having found that power irresistible,
like her Scotch sister :

But had I wist, before I kist,
That Love had been so ill to win,
I'd lock'd my heart in a case of goud
And pinn'd it wi' a siller pin.¹⁴¹

But, the *Chanson de Galanterie* is allowed in, though only on sufferance,
and during good behaviour. Of course. *Le Comte Ory*¹⁴² and all his
fellows are shut out, so are the gay *Tam-lins*,¹⁴³ the *Sire Garins*¹⁴⁴ and
all the other gallants whose motto is

Quand tu tenais la caille,
Il fallait la plumer.¹⁴⁵

Mr. Gagnon's Canadian *galanterie* is of a very harmless kind. In French
folksong the very popular pastorals beginning with

L'autre jour m'allais promener,

or words to that effect, and recounting the adventures of a lord with a
shepherdess, almost always end in one of four ways : " Si l'interlocuteur
est un berger, il sera heureux ; si c'est un seigneur, il est renvoyé à son
château ; ou bien lui-même est témoin des tendres confidences de la
bergère et du berger. Un quatrième cas peut se présenter : celui où le
seigneur a affaire à une femme mariée : il est alors sûr du succès."¹⁴⁶ In
Canadian variants the fourth case does not occur ; but the second is well
represented :

Le roi prit la plus jeune,
Dans la dans' l'a menée ;
A chaque tour de danse
Il voulait l'embrasser :

the youngest of the three "filles à marier," rejects his advances as a
matter of course—

Allez, allez, beau prince,
Allez plus loin chercher.¹⁴⁷

And *Petite Jeanneton* is just as virtuous :

Mon petit cœur en gage,
N'est pas pour un baron.¹⁴⁸

The romantic professions find plenty of willing victims :

Je voudrais bien d'un officier,
Je marcherais à pas carrés,¹⁴⁹

sings one young girl who has dismissed habitants, labourers, colporteurs,
notaries, doctors and lawyers as one and all unworthy of her attention ;
and another relates that, having been sent to sea with a gallant sailor,

Il devint amoureux de moi,
Ma mignonnette, embrassez-moi.
Nenni, Monsieur, je n'oserais :
Car si mon papa le savait.¹⁵⁰

A third damsel will not descend to particulars :

Ma fille promettez-moi donc
De n'jamais aimer les garçons.
— J'estim'rais mieux que la maison
Seraît en cendre et en charbons,
Et vous mon pèr' sur le pignon :
Vous vous chaufferiez les talons.
Le beau temps s'en va,
Le mauvais revient ;
Je n'ai pas de barbe au menton
Mais il m'en vient.¹⁵¹

A comparison between the French and Canadian variants of *Marianne s'en va-t-au moulin*¹⁵² or, still better, *Petite Jeanneton*,¹⁵³ will at once show where the line is drawn in the different countries.

The *gauloiserie* which turns the love-song into a *chanson de galanterie* is seen in *Papillon, tu es volage* !¹⁵⁴ and some others ; but, as we saw in examining the influence of humour, there really are some Canadian *Chansons d'amour*, which may be truly classed as love-songs, pure and simple. These have little of the sympathetic imagery of the Italian songs or the fiery and rather sententious passion of the Spanish, and they can hardly give us anything so touching in its artless simplicity as this :

Y a ben sept ans que ze se amoureuxa
D'on bravou labori :
Rien que d'y va son labourazou
Me fa ben plasi.¹⁵⁵

They are generally coloured by a lighter fancy and sung with a more lilting measure ; but they have as true a sincerity of their own as many of a greater intensity. In the *metamorphosis*¹⁵⁶ the lovers delight in toying with the risks by the way, because they feel that the end is certain, and in *A la Claire Fontaine*¹⁵⁷ we know they will be all the more in love afterwards for having fallen out over the "bouquet de roses." The lover *Au bois du rossignolet*¹⁵⁸ may be trifling a little, and so may the soldier who makes the not unusual military promise :

Adieu, belle Française,
Adieu, belle Française !
Je vous épouserai,
Au retour de la guerre,
Si j'y suis respecté.¹⁵⁹

Perhaps, too, it may be the "love that is too hot and strong" which "runneth soon to waste," that drives "le fils du roi" to exclaim—

Bergère on non je veux la voir
Qu'que mon cheval crève !¹⁶⁰

But there can be no doubt about the intense longing in this pathetic appeal: ¹⁶¹

Amant, que j't'ai donc fait
Qui puiss' tant te déplaire?
Est-c'que j't'ai pas aimé
Comm' tu l'as mérité?
Je t'ai aimé, je t'aime,
Je t'aimerai toujours.
Pour toi mon cœur soupire
Toujours.

Nor can we doubt that "Versailles. Paris et St. Denis." ¹⁶² would willingly be given in ransom for the prisoner of war in Holland, if his mistress had them to give. And we have only to turn to *Le Pommier Doux* ¹⁶³ to find, in the "Trois filles d'un prince," the very embodiment of unchanging love.

X.

SONGS OF THE VOYAGEURS.

The *Voyageur*, like all other workers, takes whatever comes to his hand, and is always equally ready, either to sing a spinning-chorus, like *Je le mène bien mon dévidoi*, ¹⁶⁴ or to make up a canoeing variant of his own, like

Fringue, fringue sur la rivière,
Fringue, fringue sur l'aviron, ¹⁶⁵

which is an adaptation of *Va, va, va, p'tit bonnet, grand bonnet*. ¹⁶⁶ But the most interesting songs in his repertory are naturally those connected with his own mode of life. Love, war, religion and the hardships of his calling are their principal themes; and it is especially noteworthy how much the religious tone is deepened by the sense of ever-present danger—the voyageur at work, like the soldier on active service, being a living proof that godliness is commoner in the field than in barracks. *Cadieux's song*, ¹⁶⁷ *Le Chantier d'Abacis*, ¹⁶⁸ the *Christian Voyageur* ¹⁶⁹ and *Pieriche Falcon's Songs of the "Bois-Brûlés"* ¹⁷⁰ already mentioned in connection with war and religion, are all true *Voyageur songs*. We are indebted to Dr. Larue ¹⁷¹ for several other specimens of this class. *Voici l'hiver arrivé* ¹⁷² has admirable local colour: the free-and-easy shanty-man, paid on the abominable truck system,

. . . travail ben tout l'hiver >
Au printemps on se trouve clair!

And so he sings with hearty good will—

Que l'diable emport' les chantiers;

but, for all that, he goes back to them again the following year. A *Bytown c'est un' joli' place* ¹⁷³ is a song of parting—

Nous n'irons plus voir nos blondes;

*Parmi les voyageurs*¹⁷⁴ and *Salut à mon pays*¹⁷⁵ are songs of return. Sometimes the "blondes" forget their voyageurs—

A présent m'y voilà
En arrière des autres ;¹⁷⁶

and sometimes, when they do so, they get paid back in their own coin—

A présent j'en ai-t-une autre
Qui y est ben plus à mon gré.¹⁷⁷

Among voyageurs, as among soldiers and sailors all the world over, there are always some careless adventurers, who, wandering about for years in parts unknown, find, on their return home, that their families have given them up for lost and their wives have married again. Such a dramatic situation is never thrown away upon folksingers, who everywhere have innumerable variants on this single theme; the Canadian one being *Voilà les voyageurs qu'arrivent*,¹⁷⁸ which ends without telling us what becomes of the two husbands:

J'ai donc reçu de fausses lettres
Que vous étiez mort, enterré,
Aussi, je me suis mariée.

It is a great pity to find this disappointing baldness here, as the same theme has often been so effectively treated in folksong; sometimes with almost the artistic finish of Tennyson's "Enoch Arden," and sometimes with the insight and fine reserve of Guy de Maupassant's short story "Le Retour."

XI.

VARIANTS.¹⁷⁹

Variants begin at home; and, though the local ones are often apparently of the most trifling importance, they are never to be neglected on that account. In a variant of *En roulant*¹⁸⁰ the word "mitan" occurs:

Derrier' chez nous ya-t-un étang,
Et la rivièr' passe au mitan.¹⁸¹

This in itself is a small thing; but the use of the word acquires a good deal of importance when we find that it is frequent in the Côte de Beauré, the Isle of Orleans and the Côte du Sud in Canada,¹⁸² that it occurs in the songs of Picardy¹⁸³ and that we know from what provinces many of the "colons" of the seventeenth century originally came.¹⁸⁴ As a matter of fact, the word "mitan" is used instead of the standard "milieu," in other provinces besides Picardy, and the habitants of the parts of Canada just mentioned are by no means all descended from Picards; but, all the same, this serves to show that no local variant should be overlooked, even when it is only a philological one. Some local

variants are made simply by the freakish misunderstanding of the traditional words : for instance the old round—

C'est la plus belle de céans,
C'est par la main je vous la prends,

is perverted into

C'est la plus belle de Sion,
C'est par la main nous la tenons.¹⁸⁵

Other variants of a minor kind have more to justify their existence. It is more natural for a St. Lawrence fisherman to sing

Dans les prisons de Londres

than

Dans les prisons de Nantes.¹⁸⁶

And the mixed geography of

Il est dans la Hollande,
Les Irlandais l'ont pris,¹⁸⁷

is not without sufficient reasons of its own. Variant refrains abound ; Mr. Gagnon gives us six for *En roulant* alone.¹⁸⁸ Popular humorous songs, which so easily lend themselves to improvisation, are peculiarly subject to variations: the inevitable *Malbroucke*¹⁸⁹ has two Canadian variants¹⁹⁰ touched with Indian local colour, one beginning

C'était un vieux sauvage,
Tout noir, tout barbouilla,
Avec sa vieil' couverte
Et son sac à tabac,

and both ending in much the same way :

Quatre vieux sauvages
Portaient les coins du drap,
Et deux vieilles sauvagesses
Chantaient le libéra.

There are plenty of variations of all kinds, besides these, many made up on the spur of the moment and as quickly forgotten, and others flitting about in oral tradition with more or less fixity of form. The voyageurs have their variants like the rest of the world ; a good instance being the purely Canadian *Death-song of Cadieux*,¹⁹¹ which begins in the original version—

Petit rocher de la haute montagne,
Je viens finir ici cette campagne,¹⁹²

and in that of the Red River Settlement—

Petits oiseaux, dedans vos charmants nids,
Vous qui chantez pendant que je gemis,
Si j'avais des ailes comme vous,
Je vivrais content avant qu'il fut jour.¹⁹³

It is easy enough to see that nearly all Canadian folksongs are variants from the French, somewhat remote in a few instances, but very

close in most. All nursery rhymes and lullabies may be taken as of purely French origin: so may all songs of the type of *Cécilia*,¹⁰⁴ *Le maumarié* and *La maumariée*,¹⁰⁵ *Je ne veux pas d'un habitant*,¹⁰⁶ *En roulant*,¹⁰⁷ *Au jardin de mon père un oranger lui-ya*,¹⁰⁸ *Dans les prisons de Nantes*,¹⁰⁹ *Marianne au moulin*,¹¹⁰ *Perrette est bien malade*¹⁰¹ and others too numerous to mention. The peculiar restrictions which prevented many Canadian variants from attaining a too luxuriant growth are well described by Mr. Gagnon.²⁰² We may see how powerful these restrictions were, by taking such a typical theme as *Le retour du mari* and comparing Dr. Larue's version²⁰³ with M. Fleury's four Lower Norman variants,²⁰⁴ or with those of Spain and Portugal which are the most romantic ones of all. The Canadian variant of *Au jardin de mon père un oranger lui-ya*²⁰⁵ breaks off suddenly, whilst Fleury's Norman variants²⁰⁶ tell the whole story, like those of Bartsch,²⁰⁷ Bujéaud,²⁰⁸ Legrand,²⁰⁹ and others. It is a noticeable fact in folk-history, that the Norman "Coucou"²¹⁰ has never been acclimatized in Canada.

Mon père a fait bâtir maison is sung in Saintonge and Anis, *J'ai cueilli la belle rose* in Angoumois, Cambrésis, Artois and Le Nivernais, *Au bois du rossignolet* in Franche-Comté and Switzerland, *Gai le rosier* and *J'ai trop grand peur des loups* in Poitou, *Cécilia* and *Isabeau s'y promène* in Champagne, *A St. Malo, beau port de mer* in French Brittany, *A la Claire Fontaine* in Normandy and a dozen other provinces, and *Quand j'étais chez mon père, petite Jeanneton* all over France.²¹¹ It is interesting to observe how folksongs which have wandered from their native home often retain their more ancient forms in an outlying colony: This was the case with Greek songs, so it is said; and it certainly was with the Anglo-Saxon songs, for Beowulf is the oldest Teutonic epic; the Icelandic songs preserved much of the folklore of the Old Norse, and some of the finest Portuguese ballads have been collected in the Azores; and in Canada we have versions of *A la Claire Fontaine*,²¹² *Le Pommier Doux*, and other songs which are older, and often more poetical, than most of the variants now current in France.

The number of French folksongs represented by Canadian variants in our texts is certainly remarkable; but, to give a just view of the relationship between the collections of the two countries, we must not forget to mention that no trace is to be found in either Mr. Gagnon or Dr. Larue of many of the most popular and typical songs of France. Of course, it must be borne in mind that those two gentlemen were not collecting for folklorists, but for the general public—and the public has rarely been better served—but it is, at least, noteworthy from every point of view, that they have given us no specimens of the following types: *Le mari benêt*,²¹³ *Elle a choisi le vieux*,²¹⁴ *Le moine blanc*,²¹⁵ *La chanson des regrets*,²¹⁷ *Les trois tambours*,²¹⁸ *La fille engagée au regiment*,²¹⁹ *La courte paille*,²²⁰ *L'amant qui tue sa maîtresse*,²²¹ *Martin*,²²²

Les tisserands,²²⁷ *L'occasion manquée—ou saisie*,²²¹ *Les trois enfants ressuscités par Saint-Nicolas*,²²⁸ *La mère ressuscitée*,²²⁶ *L'enfant au berceau dénonce un crime*,²²⁷ *Renaud*,²²³ *La fille qui fait la morte*,²²¹ *L'amant noyé*²²⁷ and *La Pernelle*.²²¹ All these are found in M. Rolland's collection, which is only the beginning of a great work, and is by no means exhaustive even so far as it has gone already.

Looking further afield, we find that our texts do not carry us quite so far as we might hope among the folksongs of the world at large. We have no Canadian versions of the adventures of *Bluebeard* or of *May Colven*, whilst there are innumerable variants in French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, English, Dutch, Flemish, High and Low German, Norse, Swedish, Icelandic, Polish, Bohemian, Magyar, Servian and scores of other languages. To see what could be done with Teutonic folklore, I went through the two thousand *volkslieder* of Erlach's collection;²²² but only found about twenty which had any direct affinity with those in our texts. Of course, among the twenty were variants of the misadventures of *Petite Jeanneton*, who instead of being sent

. à la fontaine
Pour pêcher du poisson²²³

goes of her own accord.

Wollt geh'n in den Wald,
Wollt Brombeer' brocken ab,²²⁴

and does so with very "variant" results. Equally of course, were stories of the loves of lords of high degree for rustic maids, and the spirited answers of girls whom their parents ask to promise

De n'jamais almer les garçons.²²⁵

The Weltkind's answer is even more fiery than la Canadienne's:

Meine Glut ist nicht zu dämpfen,
Bis ich einstens werde kämpfen
Mit dem Amor, bis auf's Blut.²²⁶

Petite Jeanneton is one of those folksongs which seem to be native to every soil; and an even greater vogue is enjoyed by the woeful *Mau-mariés*. If a world wide celebrity were any compensation for the miseries of married life, *P'tit Jean*²²⁷ would get some consolation from the knowledge that, even in far Cathay, he has fellow-sufferers; for there the "Hotung Lioness" makes her better half quake at every roar.²²⁸ The story of the prisoner and the gaoler's daughter is known everywhere and is always a most popular theme, whether the hero is simply "un prisonnier," as he is in Canada, or a peer of the realm, as he is in the *Loving Ballad of Lord Bateman*. The tragic history of *Marianson*²²⁹ is common to many countries, more particularly to Spain and Portugal, where the famous ballad of *Helena*²³⁰ has always been held in especial

honour. The variants of the *Metamorphoses of Love* have spread from the East over the whole world, and are so universal that it would be difficult to find any language in which they are quite unknown. In Mr. Gagnon's two variants²⁴¹ the lover has to follow his mistress through her changes into an eel, a lark, a nun and so forth. Some other lovers, even when they belong to the weaker sex, are much more severely tried. In the Border ballad of *Tamlane*²⁴² the hero warns his love :

They'll turn me in your arms, lady,
Into an ask and adder ;
They'll turn me to a bear sae grim
And then a lion bold.
And last they'll turn me in your arms
Into the burning gleed ;
Then throw me into the well-water,
O throw me in with speed ;
And then I'll be your own true love,
I'll turn a naked knight.

In *Penda Balot*, a negro ballad of Senegambia, the Fairy Lover turns into a crocodile, when once he has carried the girl into his enchanted kingdom. In *Alison Gross* a bewitched knight is restored to himself on Hallowe'en "when the seely Court was riding by." The dipping of *Tamlane* in water is a variant process of similar acts in an Indian tale called *Surya Bai*, in a Hottentot story, in one of von Hahn's Albanian folk-tales, and in the ancient Egyptian story of the *Two Brothers*. The classical versions, especially the story of Proteus in the fourth book of the *Odyssey*, hardly need mention.²⁴³

The *metamorphosis* affords us a striking illustration of the wonderful diffusion of identical themes ; but, when we hear of Chenier's translating a Romance folksong which had been taken down from oral tradition in the highlands of Greece, and which proved to be the same as Ophelia's song, which Shakespeare learnt from some English crowder, we are even more struck by the wonderful diffusion of identical variants.²⁴⁴ And anyone who might wish to make Canada his starting point and thence study the diffusion of theme and variants together on a universal scale, may be recommended to begin with *Voilà les voyageurs qu'arrivent*;²⁴⁵ for, wherever soldiers, sailors and songs are known, there we are sure of finding versions of *Le retour du mari*.

XII.

POETRY.

As the Canadian folksongs have been considered in the foregoing notes mainly as an interesting subject of folklore study, the question naturally follows whether they are worthy of attention from the point of view of poetry alone ? I think it may be made clear that they are worth some study from the point of view of art, though it is equally

clear that our admiration must be discriminating, for it is only within certain narrow limits that they rise into real poetry.

One limitation to their range ought to be specially noticed : it is the total lack of all genuine "natural magic." When the princess in the *Pommier Doux* wakes her sister with

and is answered
 Ma sœur, voilà le jour,
 Non, ce n'est qu'une étoile
 Qu'éclaire nos amours.

we get, indeed, a fine poetic touch ; but without any of the sympathy with Nature which we see in this little Czech poem :

Star, bright star !
 Thou art from love's fetters free ;
 Hadst thou a heart, my golden star,
 A shower of sparks thou wouldst weep for me.

The language of flowers is purely conventional and has nothing whatever of the Celtic glamour in it. The Spanish gipsy can find his mistress fairer than the white carnation as it opens to the morning sun ; but it never occurs to the Canadian habitant to use any simile of this kind. He sings glibly enough of "le bouquet de roses" and "mon joli cœur de rose" ; but it would be quite alien to his genius to employ the rose in a description of a girl asleep :

Blinded alike from sunshine and from rain,
 As though a rose should shut and be a bud again.

He tells us very pleasingly of the apple tree, that

Les feuilles en sont vertes,

but this is a mere generality, quite devoid of the peculiar charm of Chaucer's "glad light-green." In a land of falling waters, the best description of their beauty is only another general remark—

J'ai trouvé l'eau si belle,

though Nature is assuredly not less lavish in providing her similes in Canada than in Roumania, where they sing—

And through his slumbers, murmuring on, their watch the waters keep ;
 O! happy waters that may sing and lull him in his sleep!

The Canadian folksinger would never think of ascribing royal honours to the sunset, like the Greek Calabrians who call it "o iglio vasiléggui"—*ó ἥλιος βασιλεύει*. Nor could he appreciate the golden promise of some rare, quiet, sunlit afternoon in our early March, when

Winter, slumbering in the open air,
 Wears on his smiling face a dream of Spring.

No, the Canadian folksinger has never consciously felt the joy of being "made one with Nature." But surprise him unawares, and you find that

his is itself one of Nature's voices. I shall never forget one occasion, during a cruise up the Saguenay, when I heard the folksong in absolute perfection. It was a calm, warm night in the beginning of July; a cloudless full moon silvered the vast, still waters of the river and lit up the innermost recess of Eternity Bay, where the yacht lay swinging gently at her anchor—at rest, like all else around her, in that scene of beauty hushed in awe. I had been below for some time, trying to get to sleep, when I thought I heard someone calling. Going up on deck quietly, I found that my man had paddled ashore and was there singing to himself, hidden away somewhere in the darkness: he had left his heart behind him, and here was his solace. As his far-off chanted strains on the eternal theme of love, coming from out an impenetrable shadow, rose and fell upon my ear, they seemed, in their complete unconsciousness, to be as much a part of surrounding Nature as the cry of the lonely night-bird, the deep pulsation of the tide or the silent, everlasting hills themselves.

Entering the limits of our texts in search of poetry, we find that we may justify our affirmative answer in at least three different classes of songs; the popular *noël*, the *complainte* and, of course, the *love-song*. *D'où viens-tu, bergère?* is perfect as a children's picture-poem. The form of question and answer at once arouses the childish interest, and the simple descriptive touches, all borrowed from the child's own little world, are strikingly dramatic to his wondering imagination:

Qu'as-tu vu, bergère ?

Un petit enfant
Sur la paille fraîche
Mis bien tendrement.

Ya le bœuf et l'âne
Qui sont par devant,
Avec leur haleine
Réchauffent l'enfant.
Rien de plus, bergère,
Rien de plus !
—Ya trois petits anges,
Descendus du ciel,
Chantant les louanges
Du Père éternel.

"La belle *complainte* de Marianson" is the finest piece of poetry in Canadian folksong. It does not begin with an attempt at preparing its hearers to see things from the proper point of view, nor does it ever turn aside to explain its purport by the way, for the folksong always takes its hearers' intelligent sympathy for granted; but, with true dramatic insight, it sings the burden of its song as shortly and directly as it may.

And so it is, that, as a tale of fated woe, an echo from the days "of tournaments and great challenges of knights," terse, tragic and of an infinite pathos, it has come down to us, stripped of all poetic trappings, and glorious in all the grand simplicity of naked strength. In her innocence Marianson has lent her golden rings to the false friend who, having had them copied, goes out to meet her husband on his return from the war :

Marianson, dame jolie,
Ell' m'a été fidèle assez ?

Oui, je le crois, je le décrois :
Voilà les anneaux de ses doigts !

Ah ! maman, montre-lui son fils :
Ça lui réjouira l'esprit.

A pris l'enfant par le maillot,
Trois fois par terre il l'a jeté.

Marianson, par les cheveux,
A son cheval l'a-t-attachée.

Marianson, dame jolie,
Où sont les anneaux de tes doigts ?

Ils sont dans l'coffre, au pied du lit ;
Ah ! prends les clefs et va les qu'ri'.

Il n'eut pas fait trois tours de clef,
Ses trois anneaux d'or a trouvés.

Marianson, dame jolie,
Quel bon chirurgien vous faut-il ?

Le bon chirurgien qu'il me faut,
C'est un bon drap pour m'ensev'rir.

Marianson, dame jolie,
Votre mort m'est-elle pardonnée ?

Oui, ma mort vous est pardonnée,
Non pas la cell' du nouveau-né.

The typical *love-song* of Canada is *A la claire fontaine* : everyone knows it, everyone sings it and everyone can see how well it holds the mirror up to French-Canadian nature. Some of the French versions have a poetic turn of thought wanting in the Canadian :

Au milieu de la rose
Mon cœur est enchaîné :
N'y a serrurier en France
Qui puisse le déchaîner,
Sihon mon ami Pierre
Qui en a pris la clef.

On the other hand the Norman verse—

Chante beau rossignol,
Toi qui as l'œur tant gai ;
Je ne suis pas de même,
Je suis bien affligé,

will not bear comparison with the Canadian—

Chante, rossignol, chanté,
Toi qui as le cœur gai ;
Tu as le cœur à rire,
Moi je l'ai-t-à pleurer.

And then we look in vain among the current variants of France for the touching refrain—

Lui-ya longtemps que je t'aime,
Jamais je ne t'oublierai.

A deeper note is struck by the intense fidelity of the princess's love in *Le Pommier Doux*—

S'ils gagnent la bataille
Ils auront nos amours,
Qu'ils perdent ou-qu'ils gagnent,
Ils les auront toujours—

and by the self-sacrifice of the sailor in *Isabeau s'y promène*—

De la troisième plonge
Le galant s'est noyé—

and a far greater passion breathes in every word of the "fils du roi" when, *Hier, sur le pont d'Avignon*, he heard the shepherdess—

Elle chantait d'un ton si doux
Comme une demoiselle

and her singing wrought in him

A dream of fire,
All his hours ensnaring,
Burns the boy past bearing—
The dream that girls inspire.

Though these few citations may be enough to show that our texts really contain some poetry, there is one more song which tells the story of the lover's varying moods so well that I cannot forbear to quote it, too. It begins with such an airy, *gaulois* charm:

J'ai perdu mon amant
Et je m'en souci guère ;
Le regret que j'en ai
Sera bientôt passé.
Je porterai le deuil
D'un habit de satin ;
Je verserai des larmes
De vin.

But the tone soon changes; and, at the last, there comes the "long regret"—

Si j'étais hirondelle,
Vers toi, bell' demoiselle,
Par derrière ces rochers
J'irais prendr' ma volée,
Sur votre main, la belle,
J'irais me reposer,
Pour raconter la peine
Que j'ai.

There may be a suspicion of lettered workmanship about all this; yet in Maskinongé, the only part of Canada where it is known, it is truly popular; and, taken as the folksong expression of yearning for an absent lover, it will almost bear comparison with even this delightful snatch of Old-World grace:

Celui que mon cœur aime tant,
Il est dessus la mer jolie.
Petit oiseau, tu peux lui dire,
Petit oiseau, tu lui diras,
Que je suis sa fidèle amie
Et que vers lui je tend les bras.

But, whether poetical or not, the Canadian folksong, in its proper home, is never without its own peculiar charm; and we have already seen where it does and where it does not make its home: not within the shadow of the Church, though it has caught the Christian tone better than all others have; not in any moonlit fairyland, though it can tread a fairy measure well enough; not among mysterious forest-aisles, for it has no wild-wood fancy of its own; nor among "enchantments drear," for it has long since lost the thrill of fearful joy; nor yet with Nature, for it cannot see her beauties: but, at every season of the year, with the nurse at the cradle, the children at their play, the spinners at the wheel and the guests at the marriage-feast, and everywhere and always with lovers when apart: in summer time with the habitant out in the open fields and the knitters in the sun awaiting his return, or away with the voyageur in camp or in canoe; and in winter, when nights are long and cold, within the cosy farm-house circle, or far-off, amid the silent snows and beneath great sleeping pines, with a cabinful of careless shantymen gathered around their evening fire.

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